



Fire & Fuels Information 2005

Parks Pull Off Early-Spring Burn

Whoosh! The crew member on the helicopter inserted another fusee into the dispenser tube and watched it drop nearly 150 feet to the forest below. Small columns of smoke were starting to be visible on the mountainside. The radio crackled with the message that firefighters on the ground were also beginning ignitions using hand-held drip torches. Finally, after several years of waiting, the Lewis Creek Prescribed Fire was underway (see map and description on pages 2-3).

Timing is Everything

This prescribed fire, located north of the Cedar Grove area, was originally planned as a fall burn. So why were firefighters igniting on March 16 and 17, 2005?

For the last several years, the parks were unable to complete the 1,000-acre project due to regional air quality conditions during September and October. Thus, with cooperation from the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, the parks took advantage of some warm spring weather and burned 30% of the project. The fire spread in a typical mosaic pattern leaving patches of burned and unburned plants, which mimics how fires burn naturally.

A Win-Win Project

Completing a portion of this prescribed burn during the spring is good for park resources, air quality, and park neighbors.

Burning in the spring is supported by initial results from a research study conducted in these parks beginning in 2000. The study is looking at how plants, animals, and soils are affected by fire depending on the season of burning. While the effects are different, it appears that there are not negative



Top: Fire staff gets ready to ignite the Lewis Creek Prescribed Fire in Kings Canyon National Park by preparing ignition devices called "fusees." Lower Left: Strapped in next to the helicopter's open door, a crew member drops one of many fusees through the Aerial Fusee Ignition Dispenser (AFID). Lower Right: Fire personnel patrol the perimeter of the prescribed burn and use hand-held drip torches to ignite from the fireline.

effects from burning in the spring rather than the fall. Of course, early burning is often impossible because fuel moistures can be too wet from snow and rain.

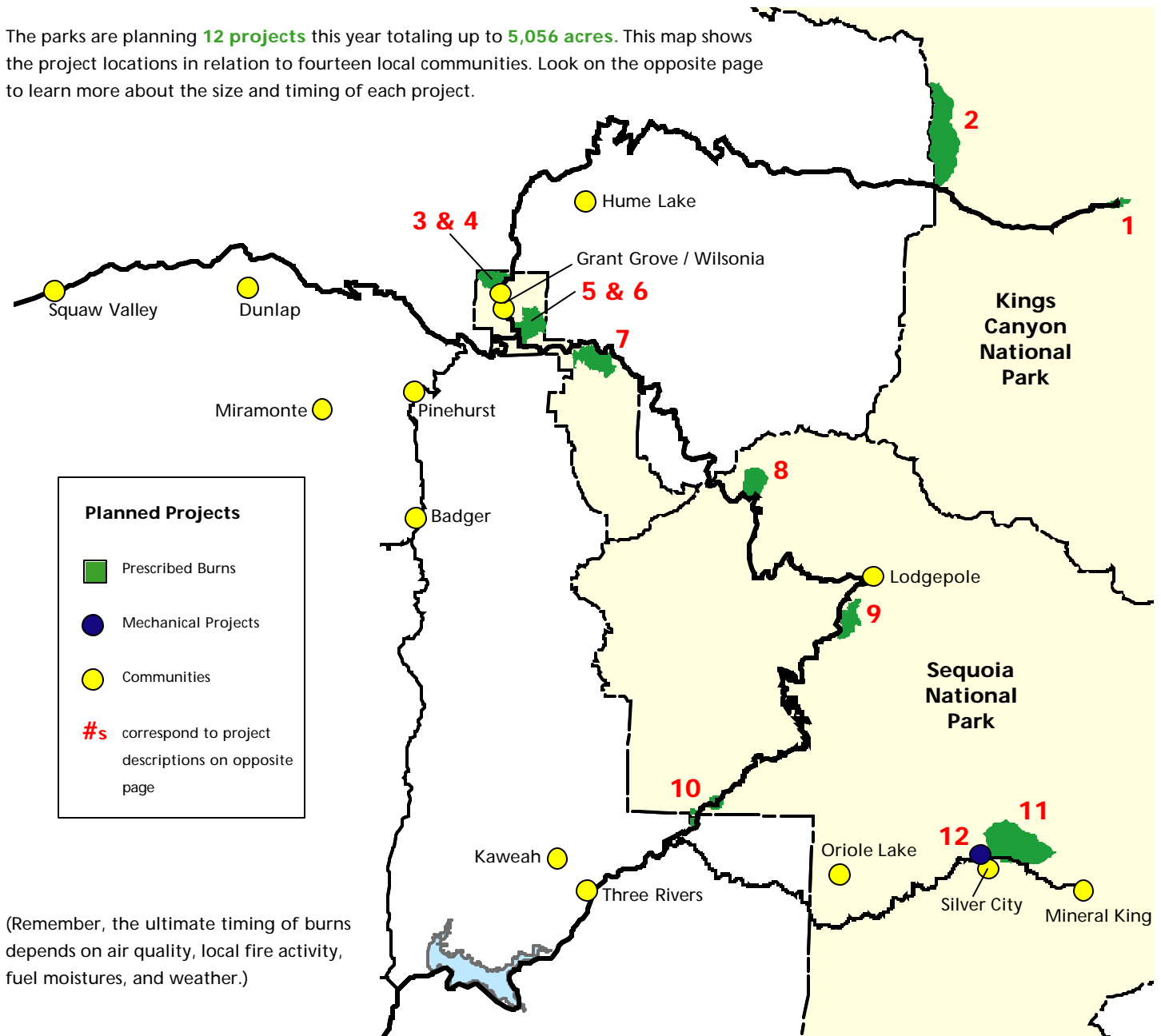
Finally, park visitors, neighbors, employees, and local businesses were not impacted during the burn because the Cedar Grove area, including the road and all facilities, was closed during March as it is every year. The remainder of the project is planned for fall to prevent smoke impacts during the busy summer season.

INSIDE

List of planned
projects for
summer and fall
2005

Project Locations for 2005

The parks are planning **12 projects** this year totaling up to **5,056 acres**. This map shows the project locations in relation to fourteen local communities. Look on the opposite page to learn more about the size and timing of each project.



What about Lightning Fires?

In 2004, the lightning-caused McClure Fire spread naturally in the extreme northern part of Kings Canyon National Park. Unlike the planned projects described in this newsletter, lightning fires, like the McClure Fire, occur each year at unexpected times and locations. NPS crews are trained to respond quickly in these situations. If necessary, the parks are ready to shift priorities from planned projects to the management or suppression of lightning fires.

Project Descriptions

Cedar Grove Area

- 1 Roads End** - 152 acres / summer / Cedar Grove valley area
- 2 Lewis Creek** - 1,000 acres / early spring & fall / northwest of Cedar Grove area. The parks have already conducted prescribed burns in the Lewis Creek drainage in the late 1990's. This project will complete restoration efforts. In the future, managers will rely on lightning-caused fires here to maintain natural conditions. ([see article on page 1](#))

Grant Grove Area

- 3 / 4 Grant West I** (260 acres) and **Grant West II** (101 acres) / after Labor Day / northwest corner of Grant Grove area. These burns will mimic the frequent natural fire cycle in this area and will consume the dead and down material created by earlier prescribed fires completed in the 1990's.
- 5 / 6 Grant E** (354 acres) and **Grant G** (152 acres) / summer / southeast corner of Grant Grove area. The goal of these burns is to restore fire and reduce fuels to protect private residences and government buildings.
- 7 Upper Redwood** - 619 acres / summer / southeast of Grant Grove. The goal of this project is to reduce fuels, maintain healthy forest conditions, and stimulate regeneration in one of the world's largest sequoia groves.

Lodgepole / Giant Forest / Dorst Areas

- 8 Cabin Meadow** - 441 acres / summer / above Dorst Campground
- 9 Quarry** - 415 acres / summer / between Lodgepole and Giant Forest. Due to this project's location near the new Sherman Tree parking area, the burn may be reduced in size to coordinate with construction activities.

Foothills Area

- 10 Ash Mountain / Hospital Rock** - 25 acres / late spring / near park head quarters. The goal is to create defensible space around buildings near park headquarters and a popular public picnic area.

Mineral King Area

- 11 Highbridge** - 1,517 acres / fall / north of Silver City
- 12 Silver City III** - 20 acres / summer / surrounding the community of Silver City. This is the third phase of a fuel reduction project designed to protect residents and structures from wildfire by thinning /removing excess fuels and piling them for later burning. Over this past winter, the parks burned numerous piles from fuel reduction projects completed last year in Bearpaw, Cedar Grove, Lodgepole, Oriole Lake, Silver City, and Wilsonia.



Reducing Your Exposure to Smoke

In the foothill communities here in the southern Sierra Nevada, smoke is an unfortunate reality. Whether it is present from an uncontrolled wildfire or a planned prescribed burn, here are a few simple actions that you can take to reduce your exposure:

Stop outdoor activity when smoke is present. Avoid physical exertion. Stay indoors as much as possible, especially seniors and children.

Close windows, doors, and outside vents when it is smoky. Set your air conditioner to re-circulate. Ventilate your home and work place when it is not smoky.

Drink lots of water, eat a balanced diet, and get adequate rest. A healthy immune system is the best protection against the effects of smoke.

Be diligent about taking any medicines prescribed by your doctor. People with pre-existing respiratory problems like heart or lung disease, asthma, or emphysema are at greater risk from smoke.

Don't bother wearing paper masks. These masks generally will not protect your lungs from wildland fire smoke, and they may make it harder for you to breathe.

Consult the local Air Quality Index (AQI) on TV or in newspapers for assistance in planning your daily activities. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health danger.

Pay attention to your symptoms. Some people have undiagnosed respiratory problems that can be triggered by exposure to smoke. Adhere to the guidelines above. Consult your healthcare provider if you experience sudden fatigue, heart palpitations, dizziness, chest or arm pain, or difficulty breathing.



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U.S. Department of the Interior

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Standard Mail G-83
U.S. Postage and Fees Paid
U.S. Department of the Interior

INSIDE

List of Planned Projects for 2005

Fire & Fuels Management



*Protecting People
Restoring Natural Resources*

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



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About this Newsletter
This bi-annual newsletter is designed to provide accurate fire information for the residents of local communities near Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Postal Customer

NPS Fire & Fuels Management



NEW FIRE ENGINE

Kings Canyon National Park has a brand new fire engine. Engine 52 will be used to support structural fire operations in the Grant Grove area. Staffed by a Volunteer Fire Company, it will provide initial attack for building fires in employee residences, private homes, park facilities, hotel rooms, and cabins. The existing Engine 51 will continue to respond to wildland fires with a full-time National Park Service crew.

CAREERS IN FIRE

Students from Washington Intermediate School in Dinuba took a few minutes to learn about fire management careers during a four-day park trip in March 2005. They were one of four groups that participated in "Sequoias for Youth," an educational program sponsored by the National Park Service, seventeen chapters of Kiwanis International, and the Sequoia Village Inn. Other groups came from Lindsay, Visalia, and South Central Los Angeles.

